



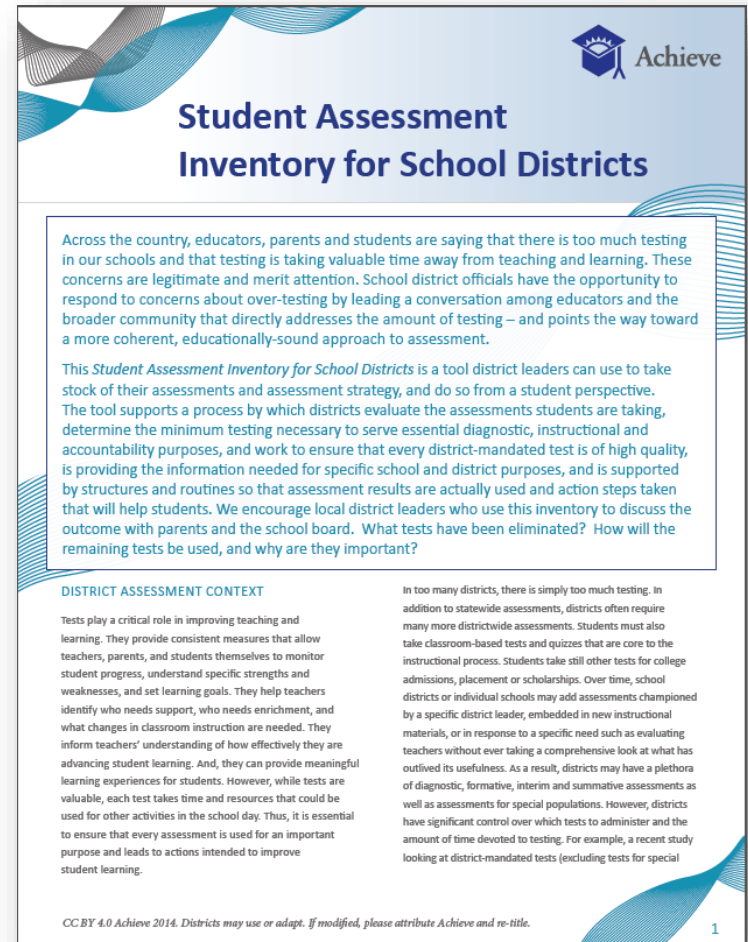

# Assessment Inventory for School Districts

*North Dakota Department of Public  
Instruction*

July 19, 2016

# Addressing concerns about too much testing

- ◆ There are **legitimate concerns** from parents and the public about too much testing.
- ◆ The volume of testing goes well beyond those required by states, and the **layers** of state, district, and school assessment do not always add up to a cohesive, aligned, informative whole.
- ◆ Achieve's *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts* is designed to assist district leaders in **taking stock** of their assessments *and* assessment strategy.



**Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts**

Across the country, educators, parents and students are saying that there is too much testing in our schools and that testing is taking valuable time away from teaching and learning. These concerns are legitimate and merit attention. School district officials have the opportunity to respond to concerns about over-testing by leading a conversation among educators and the broader community that directly addresses the amount of testing – and points the way toward a more coherent, educationally-sound approach to assessment.

This *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts* is a tool district leaders can use to take stock of their assessments and assessment strategy, and do so from a student perspective. The tool supports a process by which districts evaluate the assessments students are taking, determine the minimum testing necessary to serve essential diagnostic, instructional and accountability purposes, and work to ensure that every district-mandated test is of high quality, is providing the information needed for specific school and district purposes, and is supported by structures and routines so that assessment results are actually used and action steps taken that will help students. We encourage local district leaders who use this inventory to discuss the outcome with parents and the school board. What tests have been eliminated? How will the remaining tests be used, and why are they important?

**DISTRICT ASSESSMENT CONTEXT**

Tests play a critical role in improving teaching and learning. They provide consistent measures that allow teachers, parents, and students themselves to monitor student progress, understand specific strengths and weaknesses, and set learning goals. They help teachers identify who needs support, who needs enrichment, and what changes in classroom instruction are needed. They inform teachers' understanding of how effectively they are advancing student learning. And, they can provide meaningful learning experiences for students. However, while tests are valuable, each test takes time and resources that could be used for other activities in the school day. Thus, it is essential to ensure that every assessment is used for an important purpose and leads to actions intended to improve student learning.

In too many districts, there is simply too much testing. In addition to statewide assessments, districts often require many more districtwide assessments. Students must also take classroom-based tests and quizzes that are core to the instructional process. Students take still other tests for college admissions, placement or scholarships. Over time, school districts or individual schools may add assessments championed by a specific district leader, embedded in new instructional materials, or in response to a specific need such as evaluating teachers without ever taking a comprehensive look at what has outlived its usefulness. As a result, districts may have a plethora of diagnostic, formative, interim and summative assessments as well as assessments for special populations. However, districts have significant control over which tests to administer and the amount of time devoted to testing. For example, a recent study looking at district-mandated tests (excluding tests for special

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# What is the Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts?



- ◆ The objective is to **determine the minimum testing necessary to serve essential diagnostic, instructional and accountability purposes.**
- ◆ Taking stock and then taking action requires **significant district commitment.**
- ◆ The inventory tool is **only one element of a thoughtful longer process** that both engages productively with concerns about testing and leads to real changes in testing practice.
- ◆ The inventory is **not a one-time event.** Districts should regularly re-examine their assessments in light of changing district needs and improvements in available assessments.
- ◆ The inventory and related resources are **free to use and adapt.**
- ◆ [www.achieve.org/assessmentinventory](http://www.achieve.org/assessmentinventory)



# How was the Assessment Inventory developed?



## **Achieve developed the assessment inventory to support a voluntary, district-led process:**

- ◆ Achieve developed an initial draft of the inventory tool and shared with a broad network of state and district leaders and experts for feedback.
- ◆ In partnership with the Connecticut State Department of Education, Achieve piloted a revised version of the tool with a group of eight districts across Connecticut. Achieve finalized the tool based on feedback from these districts.
- ◆ Achieve continues to work with states, districts and partners to develop and share additional resources to support use of the inventory.
- ◆ [www.achieve.org/assessmentinventory](http://www.achieve.org/assessmentinventory)



# Assessment inventory resources



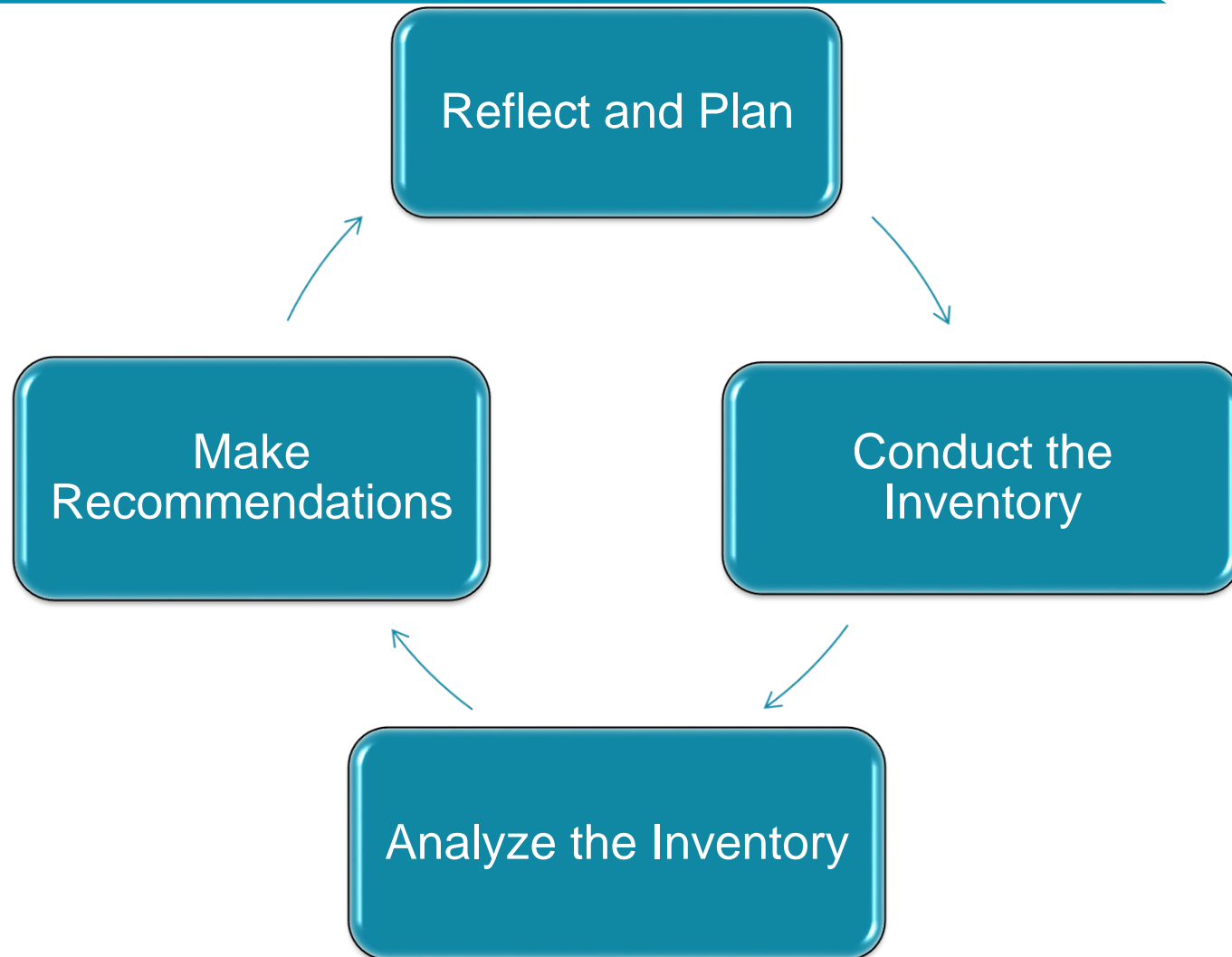
- ◆ Training materials
  - ◆ Setting the Context (90 minutes)
  - ◆ Inventory Planning (4 hours)
  - ◆ Stakeholder Mapping
  - ◆ Assessment Inventory Training Scenarios
  - ◆ Communications and Messaging
- ◆ District Guidance
- ◆ Sample teacher, parent, and student focus group and survey protocols
- ◆ Considerations for Special Education Assessment Systems
- ◆ Considerations for Assessing English Language Learner Students
- ◆ Coming soon: Assessment 101 resources for school board members





# Components of the Assessment Inventory

## Four stages of the process



# Stakeholders recommended to be part of a leadership team and/or consulted during the process



**District leaders should ensure that they have the necessary district and school staff involved in an inventory leadership team and/or consulted during the process.**

**Districts should think about the role of the following stakeholders:**

- ◆ District Assessment Director/Coordinator
- ◆ Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
- ◆ District financial staff
- ◆ School board members
- ◆ Data Coaches or other role that works with school-based staff around data
- ◆ School leaders including principals, instructional coaches, and lead teachers
- ◆ Teachers
- ◆ School counselors
- ◆ Parents
- ◆ Students

**Given that assessment decisions have often been made in silos, it is particularly important that the team crosses offices and responsibilities to ensure a holistic approach**





# Reflect and Plan: Guiding Questions



## **Districts use a set of guiding questions to initiate the planning process.**

- ◆ What is the district context in which the inventory is being considered?
- ◆ What are the objectives of the student assessment inventory?
- ◆ Who will collect the information needed for the inventory table? How will they access that information?
- ◆ What is the scope of the inventory? Which assessments should be included and excluded from the inventory table?
- ◆ What individual or entity has the authority to act on the results of the inventory? Who will be making the recommendations?



## District context



- ◆ What is the district context in which the inventory is being considered?
  - ◆ Current district assessments
  - ◆ Implementation of new statewide standards and/or assessments
  - ◆ Parent or school board concern about testing load
  - ◆ Other district initiatives
  - ◆ District leadership turnover
  - ◆ Teacher unions
  - ◆ Funding



# Identify and map your stakeholders



- ◆ Identifying those stakeholders who are most critical in your district to the assessment inventory process.
- ◆ Determining the current level of support and criticality of support for each stakeholder.



# Stakeholder mapping 2 x 2 matrix



Importance of support	High		
	Low		
		Low	High
		Current level of support	



# Conduct the Inventory: Inventory Table



- ◆ There are three types of questions being asked in the table:
  - ◆ Basic information questions
  - ◆ Use/purpose questions
  - ◆ Operational questions
- ◆ Some information to complete the table will not be directly available from test specifications and will require communicating with users of the assessment, especially with respect to issues of assessment use. A short survey or set of focus groups is strongly recommended to better understand how assessments are being used by multiple audiences.



# Inventory Table: Basic Information Questions



Name of Individual(s) completing the table Date				
Optional Category: English Language Arts (e.g., grade level, subject)				
Name of assessment	(Example) PLACE ELA			
Entity requiring assessment <i>state – SEA or other agency; district; or school</i>	District			
Grade(s) tested	5-8			
Course(s) or subjects tested	ELA			
Which students are eligible or required to take assessment?	All students in these grades who are also required to take regular state assessment			
Type of assessment <i>summative; interim/benchmark; formative; diagnostic</i>	Benchmark			
To which content standards is the assessment aligned? <i>(source of alignment verification)</i>	Common Core State Standards ( <i>Independent review by Dr. Anne Jones using Student Achievement Partners Assessment Eval. Tool</i> )			



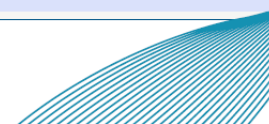


# Inventory Table: Use/Purpose Questions



<b>Intended purpose(s) of the assessment</b>	Measure student knowledge of ELA standards in reading comprehension			
<b>Intended use(s)<sup>1</sup> of the assessment</b>	Predict ELA performance on state assessment and inform instructional practice			
<b>Users of the assessment</b>	District assessment staff and teachers			
<b>Do users of the assessment use it for its intended use(s)?</b>	Yes ( <i>district</i> ) No ( <i>educators</i> )			
<b>To what degree do users of the assessment find it useful or not useful?</b> 1 – not useful 2 – somewhat useful 3 – useful 4 – very useful <b>Explain why.</b>	2 – <i>district staff find it accurately predicts performance on state assessment, but that the results are not useful for educators to inform instruction</i>			

<sup>1</sup>Federal and/or state accountability, district accountability, predictive, diagnostic, instructional uses (e.g., grouping), high school graduation, student promotion/retention, factor into course grades, college admissions, teacher evaluation, Advanced Placement credit, International Baccalaureate, English language proficiency, international comparisons, other uses.



# Inventory Table: Operational Questions



Type of administration	Paper booklet/scantron			
Item type(s)	Selected response			
Test administration time	150 minutes (includes 15 minutes of instructions read aloud by teacher)			
Testing window	10/1–10/15 and 3/1–3/15			
Test frequency	Given twice a year, in October and March			
Time between test administration and results to users	24 hours for raw data to district; 3 weeks for analysis			
Vendor	Tests4Schools			
Contract expiration date	4/1/2015			
Entity that holds contract	District			
Annual cost (total and per student)	\$38,000 total, \$19.00 per student (grades 5-8)			
Funding source(s)	Local funds			



# Incorporate Stakeholder Feedback



**Stakeholder feedback is critical to inform the inventory process and promote transparency.**

- ◆ Which stakeholders are most critical to engage through your assessment inventory process?
- ◆ When and how often will you engage these stakeholders?
- ◆ What is the current level of awareness and support?
- ◆ When, where, and how will their support be needed?



## Example: Talking to Teachers



### **Stakeholder feedback is critical to inform the inventory process and promote transparency.**

- ◆ What are some examples of district assessments that have been helpful/not helpful to your work, such as informing instructional practice, diagnosing student needs or predicting a student's later performance? How have they been helpful/not helpful?
- ◆ How have teachers been trained on the use of assessments?
- ◆ How useful are score reports for teachers? Do teachers share score reports with parents and students?
- ◆ What local assessments, if any, would you suggest the district continue to administer as it does today? Why?
- ◆ What local assessments, if any, would you suggest the district consider eliminating from the assessment program? Why?



# Analyze the Inventory



**In analyzing the inventory, it is critical to do several levels of analysis.**

- ◆ Developing a **student-level perspective** by looking across all assessments students take at a particular grade level or grade band, and then by particular student needs and characteristics.
- ◆ Identifying assessments that the district will **continue** to administer, ensuring a shared understanding of their intended purpose(s) and actual use(s), and determining if any changes are necessary (e.g. to improve test quality, alignment or utility).
- ◆ Identifying the assessments that may be **eliminated or where significant changes are necessary**.
- ◆ Helping districts **build toward recommendations** while reengaging with key stakeholders to review potential options and decision points.



# Make Recommendations



**Based on the inventory analysis, what recommendations will the district make to streamline and/or strengthen its assessment program?**

Number	Recommendation	Rationale	Authority	Timing of Recommendation	Action Steps
Example	Discontinue use of PLACE ELA beginning in January 2015	Redundant with ELA Grow test	Superintendent	Sept. cabinet meeting	Need to write proposal memo with supporting evidence
1					
2					
3					
4					





# Common Questions about the Inventory



- ◆ How long does the inventory process take?
  - ◆ From forming a leadership team to making recommendations, districts have taken between 4-8 months to complete the process.
- ◆ How intense is the process?
  - ◆ This varies, depending on the size of the district, number of assessments reviewed, and number of stakeholders consulted. A typical process would include monthly meetings of the leadership team, plus time for survey and/or focus group data collection and review.
- ◆ Which assessments should be reviewed?
  - ◆ Except for the smallest districts, we recommend that districts review common assessments administered across multiple classrooms. This would exclude individual teacher-designed tests and quizzes, as well as other formative assessments.



# Assessment Inventory Results

## Examples of recent momentum



- ◆ **Connecticut** provided grants to nearly 50 districts to go through an assessment inventory process by summer 2015.
- ◆ **Delaware** is providing grants to all districts to streamline assessments using Achieve's assessment inventory process, and has used the tool to inventory all statewide assessments.
- ◆ **Idaho** and **Illinois** modified and circulated versions of Achieve's tool. **Kentucky** shared the Achieve tool with all districts.
- ◆ [CCSSO guidance to states](#) featuring Achieve's assessment inventory.
- ◆ **EdWeek** article [featuring HQAP Illinois districts and ISBE](#).
- ◆ Achieve supported 15 districts in 4 states to complete the assessment inventory.
- ◆ Achieve has launched a partnership with the National School Boards Association.



# High Quality Assessment Project (HQAP) grant



- ◆ Four sites selected in January-February 2015 to receive sub-grants to complete the assessment inventory and make recommendations to decision-making body (e.g., school board, superintendent).
  - ◆ Capitol Region Education Council (CT) (Bloomfield, Branford, East Lyme, Hartford, Region #6, Tolland, Vernon)
  - ◆ Educational Service Center (ESC) of Central Ohio (Buckeye Valley, Olentangy, Westerville, Worthington)
  - ◆ Knox County Schools
  - ◆ Illinois (Bensenville, Urbana, West Aurora, ISBE)
- ◆ Achieve provided ongoing support through April 2015 cross-site convening, July 2015 cross-site webinar, monthly calls with each site, communications support, and resource development.



# Results



- ◆ **Reduction or elimination of assessments.** In two sites, Illinois and Ohio, reductions in testing were significant, particularly for benchmark/interim and K-2 diagnostic assessments for reading.
- ◆ **Increased engagement with stakeholders.** All sites reported benefits from engaging stakeholders in the process and in particular parents.
- ◆ **Identification of training needs.** Several districts identified the need to provide training to teachers and other staff on the purpose, administration, and retrieval and analysis of the data of specific assessments. Assessment literacy training was also identified as a priority and especially how to make informed decisions about creating and/or purchasing assessments and how to appropriately interpret the assessment results.
- ◆ **Assessment Inventory in Action** brief describes the work of the HQAP districts.





# Advancing the Conversation





## Lessons from Districts



- ◆ Testing burden related to special populations is real – and more nuanced.
- ◆ Challenging to make local decisions when the state approach to summative assessment is in flux.
- ◆ Tremendous gaps in assessment literacy amongst stakeholders within the system. May need to level-set.
- ◆ Conversations may range from technical to more emotional. Range of interactions and experiences with assessment.
- ◆ Schools may interpret voluntary guidance from districts as a stronger signal than the district intends.



## Benefits to Advancing this Work



- ◆ Driving a process to streamline assessment pushes the conversation about quality and can help create the conditions to spur innovation.
- ◆ Engaging with stakeholders – including students, parents and educators- throughout the process can help build the narrative for the story you want to tell.
- ◆ Evidence and feedback gathered can be used to demand better, higher quality, and more aligned assessments. This is particularly helpful in vendor selection, and even more powerful when done collectively as a district or group of districts.
- ◆ This process helps build assessment literacy for all involved – this is good professional learning.
- ◆ This process can provide greater transparency and strengthen communication amongst stakeholders- push on the public reporting and data elements of the remaining assessments.



## Q&A



**For more information:** [www.achieve.org/assessmentinventory](http://www.achieve.org/assessmentinventory)

- ◆ Jacob Mishook, Associate Director, Assessment and Accountability  
[jmishook@achieve.org](mailto:jmishook@achieve.org)

***We are very interested in hearing your feedback.***

